

15. COMMUNITY BATHING BY SUNBIRDS AND WHITE-EYES
IN SUMMER

At the peak of the summer when Pune is incredibly hot and dry, I have observed a rather unusual phenomenon. At sun-up on these very hot mornings there is always some moisture on the wide banana leaves. A large number of Purple Sunbirds, Purple rumped sunbirds and White-eyes collect on these leaves for a community bath. I have seen several birds, as many as twenty at a time, aggregated on the four banana trees in my garden. They have a bath on the wet drops, and sometimes also drink the drop. I have

seen them fluttering their wings and sliding down the sloping central rib. They also turn on their side to wet their wings more effectively.

The birds often squabble over the leaves which have the most moisture. As the sun rises further the leaves dry up and the birds move off to come back the next morning.

This summer I watched this for about three weeks, by which time the monsoons came and put an end to this daily morning activity.

23/5 BUND GARDEN ROAD,
PUNE-411 001,
October 14, 1981.

ERACH K. BHARUCHA

16. RECIPROCAL PREDATION BETWEEN A WEAVER BIRDS AND
A LIZARD SPECIES

While studying the ecology of weaver birds in the Punjab, we have come across an interesting interaction between a weaver bird and a lizard species. We observed adult Baya Weavers *Ploceus philippinus* (Linnaeus) hunting small young of the Common Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor* Daudin and feeding them to their nestlings on 24 August 1979 at Village Bias Pind, District Jullundur. The parts of young *Calotes* lizards were also recovered from the gut of 10.9% (6 out of 55) Baya nestlings killed for studying their food from the same area during 1979. This clearly established that these lizards were common constituents of the nestling diet of Baya in the study area. On the contrary, the adult lizards of the same species were recorded feeding on eggs of the Baya Weaver birds.

Therefore, *Ploceus philippinus* and *Calotes versicolor* were predated upon the young stages of each other.

There are no earlier records of the Baya Weaver feeding on lizards in any part of India. However, *Calotes versicolor* is already a known predator of eggs and young of birds (Smith 1934). Ali and Ambedkar (1957) also recorded a *Calotes* lizard feeding on eggs of the Baya. In the study area, *Calotes* lizards were observed predated also upon eggs of the Blackthroated Weaver *Ploceus benghalensis* (Linnaeus) and the Streaked Weaver *P. manyar* (Horsfield) but these two weaver species did not predate upon lizards.

According to Professor T.R.E. Southwood (Pers. Comm.) there may be several other similar instances, particularly where the young

stages of the predators are smaller. There has been no particular term applied to such observations as yet and, therefore, the term 'reciprocal predation' is proposed hereby. Reciprocal predation in general can be defined as predation by a prey species on the young stages of its predator species.

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY,
PUNJAB AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY,
LUDHIANA-141 004, PUNJAB,
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MANJIT S. DHINDSA
H. S. TOOR

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17. SIGHT RECORD OF *SERINUS PUSILLUS* AT MANANG, CENTRAL NEPAL

On 17 November 1981 we observed an adult Red-fronted Serin (*Serinus pusillus*) at about 3960 m near Manang, central Nepal (approx. 28°50'N, 83°55'E). The bird was first seen at 1540 hours at a distance of about 2.4 m, perched in a small thorn bush (*Carangana* sp.) on an arid scrub-covered hill side. It was noted as a small, heavily streaked finch, with a dark face and red forehead but colours were difficult to determine as we were looking into the sun. It was flushed after about half a minute and flew off down the slope accompanied by a second bird. It was relocated after a minute about 10 m away and was observed for a further minute perched in a thorn bush and on the ground. The red 'guardsman's cap' top to the head and dark face were very conspicuous; the body was a

pale yellowish background colour, heavily streaked dark brown; the pale orange-yellow rump was obvious in flight. The second bird was only observed briefly and appeared to be similar to the first.

The Red-fronted Serin ranges across the mountains of Asia Minor as far east as the north-western Himalayas, Ladak and Kashmir (Paynter 1968, Hie and Etchécopar 1970). Flemming *et al.* (1979) record it as "fairly common" in North Nepal occurring "as far east as the Kali Gandaki", which they regard as a biogeographical division between Eastern and Western species. Our record appears to be the most easterly of the species in Nepal, being to the east of the Kali Gandaki Valley and separated from it by a spur of mountains running north from Annapurna Himalaya.